

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVB #0576 2611233
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 181233Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9540
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS ZAGREB 000576

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [HR](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR FOLEY PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT
MESIC

¶1. (U) Ambassador Foley presented his credentials to Croatian President Stjepan Mesic on Sept. 15. In his remarks, Ambassador Foley said he was "proud to be representing the United States in a country that has so recently become our ally within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization." The Ambassador emphasized the US was taking seriously its responsibilities toward Croatia as a NATO ally, and saluted Croatia's contributions to operations in Afghanistan, Kosovo and elsewhere. Noting that both Croatia and the United States were facing serious economic challenges, Ambassador Foley pledged to "make every effort in order to strengthen our economic relationship." Similarly, he strongly supported Croatia's aspirations to membership in the EU, and the implementation of all the reforms required in the process.

¶2. (U) In his remarks, President Mesic said Croatia "salutes with enthusiasm the new highlights in American foreign policies" that President Obama has introduced. Mesic said he especially valued the fact that the U.S. today was "open to dialogue with all and honors the specificities of individual nations and regions." President Mesic said that, because of its own recent war, Croatia particularly valued peace, and remained committed to the global fight against terrorism. Mesic told the Ambassador he planned to stay active in politics even after the end of his second and final term in February 2010. He said he would continue to promote the importance for Croatia of a democratic system based on antifascism.

¶3. (U) Following the prepared remarks, the President sat down with the Ambassador for fifteen minutes and provided a tour d'horizon of the region, focusing on Kosovo and how the issue complicates better relations with Serbia, and on Bosnia, where he reaffirmed GoC support for Dayton even in the context of deepening problems there. Mesic expressed satisfaction with the agreement lifting Slovenia's blockade of Croatia's accession bid, but noted that eventual arbitration of the maritime border dispute must be based on international law. Ambassador stressed that each side must accommodate the other's needs in order to reach an arbitration agreement, and that Slovenia must believe that junction or contact with the High Sea is explicitly a possible, though not foreordained, outcome.

¶4. (U) Mesic said he would invite the Ambassador for dinner following his trip to UNGA in order to have a substantive discussion of these and other issues.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Mesic's remarks indicate that, during his final months in office, he will remain a constructive voice on regional issues. But his most interesting comments were those directed at the domestic political audience. Speculation continues that Mesic hopes to lead a "third block" of small and regional parties that could subsequently form a post-electoral coalition with the SDP. Mesic has publicly denied these specific stories, but his remarks on September 15 clearly indicate he wants to remain active politically in some fashion. END COMMENT.
FOLEY